

KUBATANA

'KUBATANA' PRESENTED AT VESTFOSSEN KUNSTLABORATORIUM IN NORWAY, IS GALLERIST AND CURATOR KRISTIN HJELLEGJERDE'S RECENT CURATORIAL UNDERTAKING THAT PRESENTED A LARGE SCALE EXHIBITION OF CUTTING-EDGE CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART IN SCANDANAVIA. ART AFRICA CAUGHT UP WITH HJELLEGJERDE TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HOW THIS EXHIBITION CAME ABOUT.



THIS PAGE: Serge Attukwei Clottey, *NOKO Y3 DZEN – There's Something in the World*, 2019. Cut up gallon containers stitched together, Variable dimensions. Site-specific work. FACING PAGE: Cinga Samson, *Two Piece 2*, 2018. Oil on canvas, 118 x 93,5cm. Courtesy of the artist & Oliver Elst.

“HE NEEDED TO HEAR AFRICA SPEAK FOR ITSELF AFTER A LIFETIME OF HEARING AFRICA SPOKEN ABOUT BY OTHERS.”

Chinua Achebe, *Africa's Tarnished Name* (1997)



“Kubatana, meaning ‘togetherness’ in the Shona language of Zimbabwe, invites us to discover the new and exciting ways in which African artists are working today, as well as to reconsider the many stereotypes associated with Africa that still prevail.”

Kristin Hjellegjerde

Wycliffe Mundopa, *The Unchosen, Part 1*, 2017. Oli on canvas, fabric collage, 245,5 x 160cm. Courtesy of Serge Tiroche and Africa First Collection.





THIS PAGE: Leonce Raphael Agbodjélou, *Untitled Triptych* from *Demaiselles de PortoNovo* Series, 2012. C-print, 100 x 150cm. Courtesy of Jack Bell Gallery, London 35. **FACING PAGE:** Installation view of Ibrahim El-Salahi, *Meditation Tree*, 2018. Lime wood, 10,5 ft (left). Courtesy of Vigo Gallery. Joël Andrianomearisoa, *Les Horizons Complexes (de l'Amour et d'une Romance) I*, 2018. Textiles, 190 x 130cm. *Les Horizons Complexes (de l'Amour et d'une Romance) II*, 2018. Textiles, 190 x 130cm. Courtesy of the artist and Sabrina Amrani Gallery. Amadou Sanogo, *Sans Tête*, 2016. Acrylic on Fabric, 173 x 250cm. Courtesy Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery.

ART AFRICA: 'Kubatana' will be presented at Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium. Why did you choose this institution in particular to host the exhibition?

Kristin Hjellegjerde: It was more like the institution chose me. I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to work with the institution which turned a dream into a reality.

Vestfossen is a fantastic institution with a great reputation of showing cutting-edge art. It is also fantastic to be presenting this exhibition in my home country of Norway.

Why curate a large-scale exhibition of contemporary art from Africa in Scandinavia, is there a general interest and market for contemporary art from Africa in Scandinavia?

Scandinavia has not been presented with an exhibition like this before. Of course, African art has been exhibited here before

but I believe the interest in artists and work from the continent is now really growing. African art has a strong narrative – and we Scandinavians are bookish people who like great stories – so I truly believe that 'Kubatana' will be well received by Scandinavian audiences. As a Norwegian it is only natural to start from my experiences and what I know – and what I care passionately about – and this is what I have tried to present through this exhibition.

What are the outcomes you are expecting and hoping for from the 'Kubatana' exhibition?

By exhibiting this selection of artists I hope to bring awareness to, and show, the incredible energy that exists in so many parts of Africa – a positive reflection of the continent compared to what we are usually presented with by the media.

Art can change the image and infrastructure of a country and brings about inspiration and hope. I hope to break down the

preconceived ideas that people have about African art and open people's minds to how exciting African art and culture is. Especially now, it is so important for societies to learn more about each other and their cultural differences – and not judge one another because we are different.

I also hope that there will be opportunities to travel the exhibition further afield too. I have learned so much through the process of curating 'Kubatana' but there is still so much that could be added to the exhibition programme. I am extremely proud of the artists who agreed to participate in this project and to all the people who trusted in me. I hope that the friendships created during this process will deepen – and that Kubatana will grow to be another positive step forward in the development of contemporary art from Africa – and create opportunities for continuous prosperity for the all artists involved.

'Kubatana' will be on view till 21 September 2019 at Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium, Norway.

